

**Statement of Walter Parkes**  
**DreamWorks SKG**  
**Committee on Commerce Science and Transportation**  
**September 27, 2000**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, I am pleased to be here representing DreamWorks -- but I'm also here as a parent of two children, and as someone who shares the committee's interest in this issue.

In reviewing the recommendations and findings in the Federal Trade Commission's (FTC) report, I believe there are constructive actions we as an industry can take in response to the concerns and issues you've raised. I agree that we must be more diligent in providing information to parents to help them make educated choices about the movies their children may or may not see. I also agree that children should not be targeted in the marketing of movies that were made for more mature audiences. You have before you today a document that has been prepared in concert with the MPAA on specific actions concerning films rated R for violence. We embrace these industry-wide initiatives and we'll work closely with our colleagues in the industry and the MPAA in their implementation.

I do, however, want to stress that it is the industry -- in fact, the individual company's themselves -- that should take the leadership role in the

implementation of these recommendations. I'd like to talk about a few of our company's releases to illustrate why I believe this to be the case.

As a relatively new studio we have released only nine R-rated films to date. I believe we have acted in a responsible manner in marketing these films. We have been conscious of, and sensitive to, not inappropriately marketing these films to children, particularly those that were rated "R" for violence. However, we must remember that not all R-rated films are created equal. When these movies are released, our marketing department must take into careful consideration not just their rating – but their content.

A case in point is *Saving Private Ryan*. This was a World War II drama that depicted battle in a very graphic and uncompromising way, which justifiably earned it an R-rating for violence. Despite its R-rating, the film was deemed by many parents and educators to be appropriate for certain younger adults because of its historical significance. Nonetheless, DreamWorks, along with Steven Spielberg, the film's director, took to the airwaves to warn potential audiences of its violent content; in other words, this was a case when we went beyond accepted guidelines because we felt that the rating itself did not provide sufficient information.

On the other hand, consider another of our films that was R-rated for violence, *Amistad*, which brought to life a true story of the struggle for freedom that had all but faded from the page of American history. While we didn't target teenagers in our advertising, we did work with educators to create study guides regarding the Amistad incident which were made available to senior classes in High School. Could this be construed as marketing a film rated R for violence to teenagers? Perhaps -- but I doubt anyone in this room would argue against making a young adult audience aware of the Amistad, or allowing them to see it with parental supervision.

Then again, take *American Beauty*, which won the Oscar for Best Picture last year. Despite the film's artistry, it contains scenes and themes that are clearly inappropriate for younger teenagers -- and was marketed accordingly. The point is, there can be instances when the R rating for violence should not preclude a teenager from being exposed to the advertising of a film, or from seeing that film -- provided that it is with parents' full and knowledgeable consent. Each R-rated film is unique, and therefore presents unique marketing challenges. Our job is to meet those challenges responsibly, and to provide parents with information to make an educated decision.

In closing, I want to reiterate that DreamWorks has not and will not inappropriately target children in our advertising of films rated R for violence. But, the responsibility of ensuring that children view films that are age appropriate must ultimately be shared by the studios, networks, exhibitors and most importantly, parents.

Thank you.